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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by the International Federation for Family Development on behalf of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

1. "Social development requires the assurance to everyone of the right to work and the free choice of employment. Social progress and development require the participation of all members of society in productive and social useful labour" (Declaration on Social Progress and Development, General Assembly resolution 2542 (XXIV) of 11 December 1969).

2. "Particular efforts by the public and private sectors are required in all spheres of employment policy to ensure gender equality, equal opportunity and non-discrimination on the basis of race/ethnic group, religion, age, health and disability, and with full respect for applicable international instruments." Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development (chap. 3, para. 45).

Employment and decent work

3. Women and men are entitled to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Social welfare policy should be an integral element in a broad strategy of increasing employment opportunities for both women and men.

4. The three core issues addressed by the World Summit for Social Development: the alleviation and reduction of poverty; the expansion of productive employment; and the enhancement of social integration are crucial objectives in order to achieve sustainable development. These objectives should encompass the task of addressing and redressing the global inequalities and the waste of human resources generated by the lack of productive employment. The unemployed are excluded not only from economic benefits, such as social insurance, pension and medical care, but also from social activities and participation in community life. It is imperative that offers of employment exclude forced, bonded and slave labour and unacceptable forms of child labour. The degradation of labour must be vigorously located and eradicated in the labour market. Social welfare policy should be an integral element in a broad strategy of increasing employment for both women and men and should ensure that such work is as productive as possible.

Employment and families

5. What are often perceived as economic policies actually affect and are affected by the ties that exist within family units and the resources generated by families. Labour market programmes are generally focused on individuals as units of labour, rather than on family units, as the basis of primary human societies.

6. Families are a reflection of the strengths and weaknesses of the social fabric and, as such, offer a comprehensive approach to, and understanding of, global problems. Unemployment is one of the problems faced by families. In many cases a family can provide a buffer when one or more of its members are unemployed. The family dimension, therefore, should be taken into consideration when dealing with programmes on employment and decent work.

7. Special attention should be given to the need for multilateral approaches to facilitate family and work responsibilities. These should include flexible working hours or part-time work for women and men and childcare facilities to assist parents in taking care of their children.